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Ms. Walling and her pharmacist preceptor developed an educational display which reminded patients about the need to use insect repellent and indicated the type of DEET-containing products recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for use by adults and children. In 2002, the West Nile Virus infected 190 Mississippians and killed 12. With an incidence of 6.65/100,000, Mississippi was one of the hardest hit states in the nation. The outbreak led to a massive education campaign that included public service announcements, billboards, mass mailings and newspaper ads.

The public health information that was being disseminated during July of 2002 stressed the importance of DEET-containing insect repellents as protection against mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus. The patients visiting the pharmacy were sometimes confused about the recommendation and which specific products would be most appropriate to use.

Using information downloaded from the CDC website as a guide, Ms. Walling developed a display and handouts which explained the background of the West Nile Virus, how it is contracted, the early signs of infection and how to protect oneself against mosquitoes carrying the virus. The information was phrased in such a way that the patients visiting the pharmacy would easily understand it. Two displays were created: One for the counter inside the pharmacy and one for the drive-thru. The display in the drive-thru was positioned such that patients waiting in their cars could read it.

Specific DEET-containing products were highlighted, along with information as to which were safe to use with children, which had the recommended concentration of DEET, and which lasted the longest when the patient was perspiring. People stopping to pick up prescriptions were prompted to ask the pharmacist for more information and to purchase a can of repellent to keep at home.

The display was left in place for most of July and August, the season when mosquito bites were most common. The pharmacist noted that they were selling quite a bit of insect repellent and contacted the regional office of Eckerd's Drugs to describe the project, the patient reaction, and the impact on sales. The regional manager was impressed enough with the project (and the resulting increase in sales) to recommend to other stores in the area that they erect similar educational displays.

This project served to demonstrate that with only a bit of effort, community pharmacies can make a substantial impact on public health. The display took less than a day to develop, yet served to alert hundreds of people as to the public health recommendations being put forward by the government.